There was once a rich man whose wife lay sick, and when she felt her end drawing near she called to her only daughter to come near her bed, and said, “Dear child, be pious and good, and God will always take care of you, and I will look down upon you from heaven, and will be with you.” And then she closed her eyes and expired. The maiden went every day to her mother’s grave and wept, and was always pious and good. When the winter came the snow covered the grave with a white covering, and when the sun came in the early spring and melted it away, the man took to himself another wife.

The new wife brought two daughters home with her. They were beautiful and fair in appearance, but at heart were ugly. “Is the stupid creature to sit in the same room with us?” said they. “Those who eat food must earn it. She can be our kitchen-maid!” They took away her pretty dresses, and put on her an old grey kirtle, and gave her wooden shoes to wear. “Just look now at the proud princess, how she is decked out!” they laughed, and then they sent her into the kitchen. There she was obliged to do heavy work from morning to night, get up early in the morning, draw water, make the fires, cook, and wash. Besides that, the sisters did their utmost to torment her, mocking her, and strewing peas and lentils among the ashes, and setting her to pick them up. In the evenings, when she was quite tired out with her hard day’s work, she had no bed to lie on, but was obliged to rest on the hearth among the cinders. And as she always looked dusty and dirty, they named her Cinderella.

It happened one day that the father went to the fair, and he asked his two step-daughters what he should bring back for them. “Fine clothes!” said one. “Pearls and jewels!” said the other. “But what will you have, Cinderella?” said he. “The first twig, father, that strikes against your hat on the way home; that is what I should like you to bring me.” So he bought for the two step-daughters fine clothes, pearls, and jewels, and on his way back, as he rode through a green lane, a hazel-twig struck against his hat; and he broke it off and carried it home with him. And when he reached home he gave to the step-daughters what they had wished for, and to Cinderella he gave the hazel-twig. She thanked him, and went to her mother’s grave, and planted this twig there, weeping so bitterly that the tears fell upon it and watered it, and it flourished and became a fine tree. Cinderella went to see it three times a day, and wept and prayed, and each time a white bird rose up from the tree, and if she uttered any wish the bird brought her whatever she had wished for.

Now it came to pass that the king ordained a festival that should last for three days, and to which all the beautiful young women of that country were bidden, so that the king’s son might choose a bride from among them. When the two stepdaughters heard that they too were invited, they felt very pleased, and they called Cinderella, and said, “Comb our hair, brush our shoes, and make our buckles fast, we are going to the wedding feast at the king’s castle.” Cinderella, when she heard this, could not help crying, for she too would have liked to go to the dance, and she begged her step-mother to allow her. “What, you Cinderella!” said she. “In all your dust and dirt, you want to go to the festival! You that have no dress and no shoes!” But as she persisted in asking, at last the step-mother said, “I have strewed a dish-full of lentils in the ashes, and if you can pick them all up again in two hours you may go with us.” Then the maiden went to the backdoor that led into the garden, and called out, “O gentle doves, O turtle-doves, and all the birds that be. The lentils that in ashes lie, come and pick up for me! The good must be put in the dish. The bad you may eat if you wish.”

Then there came to the kitchen-window two white doves, and after them some turtle-doves, and at last a crowd of all the birds under heaven, chirping and fluttering, and they alighted among the ashes; and the doves nodded with their heads, and began to pick, peck, pick, peck, and then all the others began to pick, peck, pick, peck, and put all the good grains into the dish. Before an hour was over all was done, and they flew away. Then the maiden brought the dish to her step-mother, feeling joyful, and thinking that now she should go to the feast; but the step-mother said, “No, Cinderella, you have no proper clothes, and you do not know how to dance, and you would be laughed at!” And when Cinderella cried for disappointment, she added, “If you can pick two dishes full of lentils out of the ashes, nice and clean, you shall go with us,” thinking to herself
that it wasn’t possible. When she had thrown two dishes full of lentils among the ashes the maiden went through the backdoor into the garden, and cried, “O gentle doves, O turtle-doves, and all the birds that be. The lentils that in ashes lie, come and pick up for me!”

So there came to the kitchen-window two white doves, and then some turtle-doves, and at last a crowd of all the other birds under heaven, chirping and fluttering, and they alighted among the ashes, and the doves nodded with their heads and began to pick, peck, pick, peck, and then all the others began to pick, peck, pick, peck, and put all the good grains into the dish. And before half-an-hour was over it was all done, and they flew away. Then the maiden took the dishes to the stepmother, feeling joyful, and thinking that now she should go with them to the feast; but she said: “All this is of no good to you; you cannot come with us, for you have no proper clothes, and cannot dance; you would put us to shame.” Then she turned her back on poor Cinderella, and made haste to set out with her two proud daughters.

And as there was no one left in the house, Cinderella went to her mother’s grave, under the hazel bush, and cried, “Little tree, little tree, shake over me, That silver and gold may come down and cover me.” Then the bird threw down a dress of gold and silver, and a pair of slippers embroidered with silk and silver. And in all haste she put on the dress and went to the festival. But her stepmother and sisters did not know her, and thought she must be a foreign princess, she looked so beautiful in her golden dress. Of Cinderella they never thought at all, and supposed that she was sitting at home, and picking the lentils out of the ashes. The King’s son came to meet her, and took her by the hand and danced with her, and he refused to stand up with anyone else, so that he might not be obliged to let go her hand; and when any one came to claim it he answered, “She is my partner.”

And when the evening came she wanted to go home, but the prince said he would go with her to take care of her, for he wanted to see where the beautiful maiden lived. But she escaped him, and jumped up into the pigeon-house. Then the prince waited until the father came, and told him the strange maiden had jumped into the pigeon-house. The father thought to himself, “It cannot surely be Cinderella,” and called for axes and hatchets, and had the pigeon-house cut down, but there was no one in it. And when they entered the house there sat Cinderella in her dirty clothes among the cinders, and a little oil-lamp burnt dimly in the chimney; for Cinderella had been very quick, and had jumped out of the pigeon-house again, and had run to the hazel bush; and there she had taken off her beautiful dress and had laid it on the grave, and the bird had carried it away again, and then she had put on her little gray kirtle again, and had sat down in the kitchen among the cinders.

The next day, when the festival began anew, and the parents and step-sisters had gone to it, Cinderella went to the hazel bush and cried, “Little tree, little tree, shake over me, That silver and gold may come down and cover me.” Then the bird cast down a still more splendid dress than on the day before. And when she appeared in it among the guests everyone was astonished at her beauty. The prince had been waiting until she came, and he took her hand and danced with her alone. And when anyone else came to invite her he said, “She is my partner.” And when the evening came she wanted to go home, and the prince followed her, for he wanted to see to what house she belonged; but she broke away from him, and ran into the garden at the back of the house. There stood a fine large tree, bearing splendid pears; she leapt as lightly as a squirrel among the branches, and the prince did not know what had become of her. So he waited until the father came, and then he told him that the strange maiden had rushed from him, and that he thought she had gone up into the pear-tree. The father thought to himself, “It cannot surely be Cinderella,” and called for an axe, and felled the tree, but there was no one in it. And when they went into the kitchen there sat Cinderella among the cinders, as usual, for she had got down the other side of the tree, and had taken back her beautiful clothes to the bird on the hazel bush, and had put on her old grey kirtle again.

On the third day, when the parents and the step-children had set off, Cinderella went again to her mother’s grave, and said to the tree, “Little tree, little tree, shake over me, That silver and gold may come down and cover me.” Then the bird cast down a dress, the like of which had never been seen for splendor and brilliancy, and slippers that were of gold. And when she appeared in this dress at the feast nobody knew what to say for wonderment. The prince danced with her alone, and if anyone else asked her he answered, “She is my partner.”
And when it was evening Cinderella wanted to go home, and the prince was about to go with her, when she ran past him so quickly that he could not follow her. But he had laid a plan, and had caused all the steps to be spread with pitch, so that as she rushed down them the left shoe of the maiden remained sticking in it. The prince picked it up, and saw that it was of gold, and very small and slender. The next morning he went to the father and told him that none should be his bride save the one whose foot the golden shoe should fit. Then the two sisters were very glad, because they had pretty feet. The eldest went to her room to try on the shoe, and her mother stood by. But she could not get her great toe into it, for the shoe was too small; then her mother handed her a knife, and said, “Cut the toe off, for when you are queen you will never have to go on foot.” So the girl cut her toe off, squeezed her foot into the shoe, concealed the pain, and went down to the prince. Then he took her with him on his horse as his bride, and rode off. They had to pass by the grave, and there sat the two pigeons on the hazel bush, and cried,

“There they go, there they go! There is blood on her shoe; The shoe is too small, Not the right bride at all!”

Then the prince looked at her shoe, and saw the blood flowing. And he turned his horse round and took the false bride home again, saying she was not the right one, and that the other sister must try on the shoe. So she went into her room to do so, and got her toes comfortably in, but her heel was too large. Then her mother handed her the knife, saying, “Cut a piece off your heel; when you are queen you will never have to go on foot.” So the girl cut a piece off her heel, and thrust her foot into the shoe, concealed the pain, and went down to the prince, who took his bride before him on his horse and rode off. When they passed by the hazel bush the two pigeons sat there and cried,

“There they go, there they go! There is blood on her shoe; The shoe is too small, Not the right bride at all!”

Then the prince looked at her foot, and saw how the blood was flowing from the shoe, and staining the white stocking. And he turned his horse round and brought the false bride home again. “This is not the right one,” said he, “have you no other daughter?” “No,” said the man, “only my dead wife left behind her a little girl, Cinderella; it is impossible that she can be the bride.” But the King’s son ordered her to be sent for, but the mother said, “Oh no! she is much too dirty, I could not let her be seen.” But he had her fetched, and so Cinderella had to appear. First she washed her face and hands quite clean, and went in and curtsied to the prince, who held out to her the golden shoe. Then she sat down on a stool, drew her foot out of the heavy wooden shoe, and slipped it into the golden one, which fitted it perfectly. And when she stood up, and the prince looked in her face, he knew again the beautiful maiden that had danced with him, and he cried, “This is the right bride!” The step-mother and the two sisters were thunderstruck, and grew pale with anger; but he put Cinderella before him on his horse and rode off. And as they passed the hazel bush, the two white pigeons cried,

“There they go, there they go! No blood on her shoe; The shoe’s not too small, The right bride is she after all.”

And when they had thus cried, they came flying after and perched on Cinderella’s shoulders, one on the right, the other on the left, and so remained.

And when her wedding with the prince was to be held the false sisters came, hoping to curry favor, and to take part in the festivities. So as the bridal procession went to the church, the eldest walked on the right side and the younger on the left, and the pigeons picked out an eye of each of them. And as they returned the elder was on the left side and the younger on the right, and the pigeons picked out the other eye of each of them. And so they were condemned to go blind for the rest of their days because of their wickedness and falsehood.
Cendrillon
Charles Perrault

Once there was a gentleman who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the stepmother began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house. She scoured the dishes and tables, and cleaned madam's chamber, and those of her daughters. She slept in a sorry garret, on a wretched straw bed, while her sisters slept in fine rooms with floors all inlaid, on beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking glasses so large that they could see themselves at their full length from head to foot.

The poor girl bore it all patiently, and dared not tell her father, who would have scolded her; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work, she used to go to the chimney corner, and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderwench. Only the younger sister, who was not so rude and uncivil as the older one, called her Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her coarse apparel, was a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters, although they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the king's son gave a ball and invited all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited, for they cut a very grand figure among those of quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in selecting the gowns, petticoats, and hair dressing that would best become them. This was a new difficulty for Cinderella; for it was she who ironed her sister's linen and pleated their ruffles. They talked all day long of nothing but how they should be dressed.

"For my part," said the eldest, "I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming."

"And I," said the youngest, "shall have my usual petticoat; but then, to make amends for that, I will put on my gold-flowered cloak, and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary one in the world."

They sent for the best hairdresser they could get to make up their headpieces and adjust their hairstyles, and they had their red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poche. They also consulted Cinderella in all these matters, for she had excellent ideas, and her advice was always good. Indeed, she even offered her services to fix their hair, which they very willingly accepted. As she was doing this, they said to her, "Cinderella, would you not like to go to the ball?"

"Alas!" said she, "you only jeer me; it is not for such as I am to go to such a place."

"You are quite right," they replied. "It would make the people laugh to see a Cinderwench at a ball."

Anyone but Cinderella would have fixed their hair awry, but she was very good, and dressed them perfectly well. They were so excited that they hadn't eaten a thing for almost two days. Then they broke more than a dozen laces trying to have themselves laced up tightly enough to give them a fine slender shape. They were continually in front of their looking glass. At last the happy day came. They went to court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she lost sight of them, she started to cry.

Her godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her what was the matter.

"I wish I could. I wish I could ..." She was not able to speak the rest, being interrupted by her tears and sobbing.

This godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her, "You wish that you could go to the ball; is it not so?"

"Yes," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

"Well," said her godmother, "be but a good girl, and I will contrive that you shall go." Then she took her into her chamber, and said to her, "Run into the garden, and bring me a pumpkin."

Cinderella went immediately to gather the finest she could get, and brought it to her godmother, not being able to imagine how this pumpkin could help her go to the ball. Her godmother scooped out all the inside of it, leaving nothing but
the rind. Having done this, she struck the pumpkin with her wand, and it was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold. She then went to look into the mousetrap, where she found six mice, all alive, and ordered Cinderella to lift up a little the trapdoor. She gave each mouse, as it went out, a little tap with her wand, and the mouse was instantly moment turned into a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse colored dapple gray.

Being at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella said, "I will go and see if there is not a rat in the rat trap that we can turn into a coachman."

"You are right," replied her godmother, "Go and look."

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy chose the one with the largest beard, touched him with her wand, and turned him into a fat, jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers that eyes ever beheld.

After that, she said to her, "Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering pot. Bring them to me." She had no sooner done so but her godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else their whole lives. The fairy then said to Cinderella, "Well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with; are you not pleased with it?"

"Oh, yes," she cried; "but must I go in these nasty rags?"

Her godmother then touched her with her wand, and, at the same instant, her clothes turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels. This done, she gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the whole world. Being thus decked out, she got up into her coach; but her godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay past midnight, telling her, at the same time, that if she stayed one moment longer, the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and that her clothes would become just as they were before.

She promised her godmother to leave the ball before midnight; and then drove away, scarcely able to contain herself for joy. The king's son, who was told that a great princess, whom nobody knew, had arrived, ran out to receive her. He gave her his hand as she alighted from the coach, and led her into the hall, among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence. Everyone stopped dancing, and the violins ceased to play, so entranced was everyone with the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer.

Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of, "How beautiful she is! How beautiful she is!"

The king himself, old as he was, could not help watching her, and telling the queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

All the ladies were busy considering her clothes and headdress, hoping to have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could find such fine materials and as able hands to make them.

The king's son led her to the most honorable seat, and afterwards took her out to dance with him. She danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine meal was served up, but the young prince ate not a morsel, so intently was he gazing at her.

She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons that the prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them for they did not know her. While Cinderella was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, whereupon she immediately made a courtesy to the company and hurried away as fast as she could.

Arriving home, she ran to seek out her godmother, and, after having thanked her, she said she could not but heartily wish she might go to the ball the next day as well, because the king's son had invited her. As she was eagerly telling her godmother everything that had happened at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

"You stayed such a long time!" she cried, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been sleeping; she had not, however, had any manner of inclination to sleep while they were away from home.

"If you had been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "you would not have been tired with it. The finest princess was there, the most beautiful that mortal eyes have ever seen. She showed us a thousand civilities, and gave us oranges and citrons."
Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter. Indeed, she asked them the name of that princess; but they told her they did not know it, and that the king’s son was very uneasy on her account and would give all the world to know who she was. At this Cinderella, smiling, replied, "She must, then, be very beautiful indeed; how happy you have been! Could not I see her? Ah, dear Charlotte, do lend me your yellow dress which you wear every day."

"Yes, to be sure!" cried Charlotte; "lend my clothes to such a dirty Cinderwench as you are! I should be such a fool."

Cinderella, indeed, well expected such an answer, and was very glad of the refusal; for she would have been sadly put to it, if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderella, but dressed even more magnificently than before. The king’s son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and kind speeches to her. All this was so far from being tiresome to her, and, indeed, she quite forgot what her godmother had told her. She thought that it was no later than eleven when she counted the clock striking twelve. She jumped up and fled, as nimble as a deer. The prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the prince picked up most carefully. She reached home, but quite out of breath, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left of all her finery but one of the little slippers, the mate to the one that she had dropped.

The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had not seen a princess go out. They replied that they had seen nobody leave but a young girl, very shabbily dressed, and who had more the air of a poor country wench than a gentlewoman.

When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had been well entertained, and if the fine lady had been there. They told her, yes, but that she hurried away immediately when it struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the king’s son had picked up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time at the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true; for a few days later, the king’s son had it proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot this slipper would just fit. They began to try it on the princesses, then the duchesses and all the court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to force their foot into the slipper, but they did not succeed.

Cinderella, who saw all this, and knew that it was her slipper, said to them, laughing, "Let me see if it will not fit me."

Her sisters burst out laughing, and began to banter with her. The gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderella, and, finding her very handsome, said that it was only just that she should try as well, and that he had orders to let everyone try. He had Cinderella sit down, and, putting the slipper to her foot, he found that it went on very easily, fitting her as if it had been made of wax. Her two sisters were greatly astonished, but then even more so, when Cinderella pulled out of her pocket the other slipper, and put it on her other foot. Then in came her godmother and touched her wand to Cinderella’s clothes, making them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had worn before.

And now her two sisters found her to be that fine, beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon for all the ill treatment they had made her undergo. Cinderella took them up, and, as she embraced them, said that she forgave them with all her heart, and wanted them always to love her.

She was taken to the young prince, dressed as she was. He thought she was more charming than before, and, a few days after, married her. Cinderella, who was no less good than beautiful, gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the court.

**Moral:** Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value. This is what Cinderella’s godmother gave to her when she taught her to behave like a queen. Young women, in the winning of a heart, graciousness is more important than a beautiful hairdo. It is a true gift of the fairies. Without it nothing is possible; with it, one can do anything.

Another moral: Without doubt it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding, and common sense. These, and similar talents come only from heaven, and it is good to have them. However, even these may fail to bring you success, without the blessing of a godfather or a godmother.
Yeh-Shen (A Cinderella Story from China)
Adapted by Aai-Ling Louie, Philomel books, NY, 1982

During the time of the Ch’in and Han dynasties, a cave chief named Wu married two wives and each gave birth to baby girls. Before long Chief Wu and one wife died leaving one baby, Yeh-Shen, to be reared by her stepmother. The stepmother didn’t like Yeh-Shen for she was more beautiful and kinder than her own daughter so she treated her poorly. Yeh-Shen was given the worse jobs and the only friend she had was a beautiful fish with big golden eyes.

Each day the fish came out of the water onto the bank to be fed by Yeh-Shen. Now Yen-Shen had little food for herself but she was willing to share with the fish. Her stepmother hearing about the fish disguised herself as Yen-Shen and enticed the fish from the water. She stabbed it with a dagger, and cooked the fish for dinner. Yeh-Shen was distraught when she learned of the fish’s death. As she sat crying she heard a voice and looked up to see a wise old man wearing the coarsest of clothes and with hair hanging down over his shoulders. He told her that the bones of the fish were filled with a powerful spirit, and that when she was in serious need she was to kneel before the bones and tell them of her heart’s desires. She was warned not to waste their gifts. Yeh-Shen retrieved the bones from the trash heap and hid them in a safe place.

Time passed and the spring festival was nearing. This was a time when the young people gathered in the village to meet one another and to find husbands and wives. Yen-Shen longed to go to the festival but her stepmother wouldn’t allow it because she feared that someone would pick Yeh-Shen rather than her own daughter. The stepmother and the daughter left for the festival leaving Yeh-Shen behind. She desperately wanted to go asked the bones for clothes to wear to the festival. Suddenly she was wearing a beautiful gown of azure blue with a cloak of kingfisher feathers draped around her shoulders. On her feet were beautiful slippers. They were woven of golden threads in a pattern of a scaled fish and the soles were made of solid gold. When she walked she felt lighter than air. She was warned not to lose the slippers.

Yeh-Shen arrived at the festival and soon all were looking her way. The daughter and stepmother moved closer to her for they seemed to recognize this beautiful person. Seeing that she would be found out, Yeh-Shen dashed out of the village leaving behind one of the golden slippers. When she arrived home she was dressed again in her rags. She spoke again to the bones, but they were now silent. Saddened she put the one golden slipper in her bedstraw. After a time a merchant found the lost slipper, and seeing its value, sold it to a merchant who gave it to the king of the island kingdom of T’o Han.

Now the king wanted to find the owner of this tiny beautiful slipper. He sent his people to search the kingdom but no one’s foot would fit in the tiny golden slipper. He had the slipper placed on display in a pavilion on the side of the road where the slipper had been found with an announcement that the shoe was to be returned to the owner. The king’s men waited out of site while all the women came to try on the shoe.

One dark night Yeh-Shen slipped quietly across the pavilion, took the tiny golden slipper and turned to leave, but the king’s men rushed out and arrested her. She was taken to the king who was furious for he couldn’t believe that any one in rags could possibly own a golden slipper. As he looked closer at her face he was struck by her beauty and he noticed she had the tiniest feet. The king and his men returned home with her where she produced the other slipper. As she slipped on the two slippers, her rags turned into the beautiful gown and cloak she had worn to the festival. The king realized that she was the one for him. They married and lived happily ever after. However, the stepmother and daughter were never allowed to visit Yeh-Shen and were forced to continue to live in their cave until the day they were crushed to death in a shower of flying stones.